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GST COLLECTIONS IN DECEMBER RISE 10 PER CENT TO ₹1.64 LAKH CRORE

Continuing the upward trend, GST collections rose about 10% to ₹1.64 lakh crore in December 2023 compared to ₹1.49 lakh crore a year ago

MOP-UP UP 12% IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS

During the April-December 2023 period, gross Goods and Services Tax collection witnessed a robust 12% growth, reaching ₹14.97 lakh crore against ₹13.40 lakh crore in the same period of the previous year, the Union finance ministry said on Monday. The average monthly gross GST collection for the first nine months of FY24 saw a 12% growth from a year ago, it added

GST GROWTH FLAT IN THREE STATES

- The government has settled ₹40,057 crore to CGST and ₹33,652 crore to SGST from IGST, the finance ministry said. The total revenue of the Centre and states in December 2023 after the regular settlement is ₹70,501 crore for CGST and ₹71,587 crore for the SGST, it added | **P13**
- Rajasthan, C'garh & J'khand showed no growth in GST collections

₹160L cr

THIS IS THE 7TH MONTH THIS YEAR THAT MOP-UP EXCEEDED THIS LEVEL

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

MLA quits amid buzz on Soren's wife joining fray

CM prepares for possible arrest by ED, starts grooming Kalpana to step into his shoes

Hemant Soren

Kalpana Soren

Sarfaraz Ahmed

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

IN what could be the precursor for Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren anticipating his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate and preparing his wife Kalpana to step into his shoes, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MLA Sarfaraz Ahmed quietly vacated his Gandey seat on Sunday.

Speculation is rife that Kalpana may contest from Gandey, a general seat. Though she belongs to a scheduled tribe community, she cannot contest from a reserved tribal seat because she hails from Odisha. Her sister-in-law Sita Soren is already facing litigation as she won a reserved tribal seat in the assembly elections, though she too hails from Odisha.

"Since she hails from from Odisha, Kalpana is said to be not entitled to fight from a reserved ST seat in Jharkhand. Gandey, a general seat, might be a safe constituency for her," said political experts.

Sarfaraz represented Gandey in 1980 and 2009 as Congress MLA and in 2019 as JMM MLA. His resignation letter did not cite any reason. it was accepted the same day but the notification was issued on Monday. He was not available for comment.

Just the other day, the ED had its seventh and last summons to Soren to appear for questioning in the land scam case. It gave him the liberty to decide the date, time and venue for the questioning and directed him to respond in writing within two days. He chose not to respond. Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur called it part of the state government's strategy to deal with any untoward political situation in the state.

Kalpana, 48, hails from a business family in Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. Ever since Soren's name appeared in the office-of-profit scam last year, Kalpana has been accompanying him to different programmes inside and outside Jharkhand, seen as part of her grooming exercise. Kalpana is a business woman and runs a private school and several other businesses. She takes keen interest in women empowerment and events organised for children.

Speaker accepts it

Assembly Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto did not find it necessary to ask three-time MLA Sarfaraz Ahmed why he put in his papers before accepting it

Mysuru sculptor's Ram Lalla to be installed in Ayodhya

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

CITY-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj's Ram Lalla idol has been chosen for installation at Ayodhya's Ram Temple during the auspicious 'Prana Prathistapana Muhurtham' on January 22.

Of the three idols shortlisted, the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust on Monday selected Yogiraj's Ram Lalla through voting, according to his family members here.

Yogiraj used a unique Krishna shila (stone) from Bujjegoudanapura village in HD Kote taluk of Mysuru district to sculpt the idol along with his team.

Yogiraj hails from a family of sculptors in Mysuru and he belongs to the fifth generation.

One of the most sought after sculptors in the country, Yogiraj sculpted the 30-foot statue of Subhash Chandra Bose installed at Amar Jawan Jyoti behind India Gate in New Delhi. He is also known for his works such as the 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya in Kedarnath, 21-foot statue of Lord Hanuman at Chunchanakatte in Mysuru district, 15-foot statue of Dr BR Ambedkar and the statue of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in Mysuru.

Yogiraj's wife Vijetha, who expressed her happiness for the selection of her husband's Ram Lalla, told *The New Indian Express* that he has been working tirelessly for the past six months. "He did not even meet me or other members of our family during this period. We feel very happy that his work has been selected," she said.

Many prominent leaders from Mysuru and politicians have congratulated Yogiraj on his achievement.

Sharing his happiness on 'X', Yediyurappa said, "The idol of Lord Rama sculpted by Arun Yogiraj of Mysuru has been selected for installation in the magnificent Sri Rama Mandir of Ayodhya, which has doubled the pride and happiness of entire Rama devotees of the state. Heartfelt congratulations to 'Shilpi @yogiraj_arun'."

Yediyurappa's son and BJP state president BY Vijayendra too hailed Yogiraj for making the state and Mysuru proud. "It is the pride of Mysuru, the pride of Karnataka that the idol of Ram Lalla carved by Arun Yogiraj will be enshrined in Ayodhya on January 22," Vijayendra said.

MP PC Mohan and former minister B Sreeramulu also congratulated Yogiraj on social media. **CONTINUED ON: P4**

> **I am happy that I was among the three sculptors from the country selected to carve the idol of Ram Lalla. More than selection, people should appreciate it. Only then, I will be happy**
>
> Arun Yogiraj, sculptor

People on a street damaged by a massive earthquake in Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture in Japan on Monday. It triggered a tsunami | AP

Quake triggers tsunami in Japan

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

JAPAN on Monday was hit by a series of strong earthquakes on its western coast with one in the magnitude of 7.6 on the Richter scale, triggering tsunamis of three-metres high at its coastal areas.

The quake struck near Ishikawa Prefecture's Noto Peninsula. Many houses were damaged in the areas impacted by the quake. Rescue operations are underway.

Japan urged its citizens living near coastal areas to move to higher ground. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida advised people to follow evacuation orders closely. Bullet train services have been halted.

Local media reported that two people may have died and at least six others are trapped inside a collapsed building in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Japan's meteriological department said earthquakes with similar intensity was a possibility for a week. Tsunami warnings have been issued for the prefectures of Ishikawa, Niigata, Toyama, Yamagata, Fukui and Hyogo — all on the Sea of Japan.

There are many nuclear power plants in the affected areas, but no one has reported any damage. Highways are shut near the epicentre of the quake and more than 36,000 houses are without power.

In 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake in Japan triggered a tsunami and killing 18,000 people and displacing many.

The Indian Embassy in Tokyo set up an emergency control room. It's helpline numbers are +81-80-3930-1715 (Yakub Topno), +81-70-1492-0049 (Ajay Sethi), +81-80-3214-4734 (D N Barnwal), +81-80- 6229-5382 (S Bhattacharya) and +81-80-3214-4722 (Vivek Rathore). The embassy also provided two email ids — sscons.tokyo@mea.gov.in and offseco.tokyo@mea.gov.in. **P12**

Warning for NK & Russia

Tsunami warnings were also issued for parts of North Korea and Russia. In nearby South Korea, the weather agency urged residents to watch for changes in sea levels

FUEL CELL POWER SYSTEM

ISRO FIRES INDIA'S SPACE STATION DREAM

S V KRISHNA CHAITANYA @ Sriharikota

WHILE all eyes were set on the launch of XPoSat, India's first dedicated satellite to study blackholes, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Monday hit another important milestone. The space agency successfully tested the Fuel Cell Power System (FCPS) developed by the Kerala-based Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). This takes India a step closer to realising the country's ambition to establish the Indian Space Station.

FCPS, a 100W payload, was flown out along with nine other payloads, in the fourth stage of the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM3) rocket, utilised by ISRO as a test bed.

The most significant payload of the lot, FCPS generates electricity to be used as a power source for the space station and also produces potable water as a byproduct, which would quench the thirst of the astronauts at the station.

VSSC Director S Unnikrishnan Nair told *TNIE* that this is the first time ISRO has experimented with fuel cells in space. "Oxygen and hydrogen stored under high pressure are passed through the fuel cell assembly, which spurs a chemical reaction that produces power and pure drinking water as a byproduct," he said.

"Having a water source on-board is a must when it comes to space stations. Fuel cells are ideal for both power generation and producing water. The 100W FCPS has been a success. We wanted to see how it performs in a weightless environment, in the presence of radiation and under extreme temperatures. The entire system worked as intended. We have plans to build a 100kW FCPS in the near future," Nair said.

Second after United States

With ISRO's XPoSat (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) in orbit, India has become the second country following the United States to have a dedicated satellite to study X-ray polarisation | **P5**

ISRO's PSLV-C58, carrying the X-ray Polarimeter satellite and 10 other payloads, lifts off from Sriharikota | ISRO

1992 RIOT ACCUSED

HINDU ACTIVISTS FUME OVER ARREST

Srikant Poojary was arrested by the Hubballi-Dharwad police over violence in Hubballi in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition. Hindu activists have questioned the timing of the arrest, with the Ram temple in Ayodhya set to be thrown | **P4**

CBI notice: BJP trying to end my political career, says DKS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday alleged that some BJP leaders are trying to finish him off politically as the CBI has issued a notice to him in connection with the Disproportionate Asset (DA) case despite the Congress government withdrawing the permission given to it to probe him.

"Even after the government's withdrawal of permission given to the CBI, notices have been issued to several people and organisations, including a cooperative society, headed by me. I don't understand their objective. But it looks like they are hatching a conspiracy to trouble me and my party. This is an attempt by the BJP leaders to finish me off politically," he told reporters in reply to a query on CBI serving him the notice with regard to his alleged investment in a Kerala-based private TV channel.

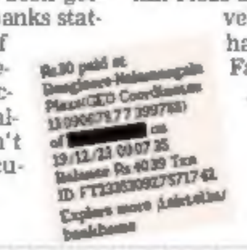
He said the CBI probe has been transferred to the Lokayukta after the High Court of Karnataka approved withdrawal of permission given to the CBI. **CONTINUED ON: P5**

Money deducted from FASTag accounts even when vehicles not on roads

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

MANY vehicle users in Bengaluru, who have purchased FASTag, a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag, for quick toll payment on national highways, now have a reason to worry.

Of late, they have been getting messages from banks stating that small sums of money have been deducted from their accounts at toll gates although they haven't travelled that particular day!



A message stating that money has been deducted from a motorist's FASTag

Among those who have received such messages is Arvind PS Tiwari, a marketing manager with a private company. "I usually go to bed by 10pm and one fine morning, I got a message from my bank stating that Rs 30 has been paid at Plaza1@ km 14825 at 11.35 pm with my vehicle number, which has the ICICI Bank Fastag. My vehicle was at my house in Kempapura that night," he told *TNIE*.

KN Shivaram Krishna, a senior manager with a private company, said he was on his way to office when he got a message that Rs 30 was paid at Bengaluru-Nelamangala toll plaza on December 19. "My vehicle was at my home in Abbigere from where I was going to my workspot. Some plazas charge up to Rs 200 for permitting vehicles to pass through. I was worried if bigger amounts could get deducted in future," he added. **CONTINUED ON: P5**

EXPRESS READ

Woman jumps on track, Metro ops hit

Bengaluru: Metro train operations of the Purple Line came to a halt for 15 minutes when a woman jumped onto the electrified tracks at Indiranagar station around 6.40 pm to retrieve her mobile phone that she had dropped on the tracks. Metro staffers immediately switched off power supply. The woman will be caught whenever she enters any of our stations, an official said. **P3**

Three shot dead in Manipur

Imphal: Three persons were shot dead and five others injured in Manipur's Thoubal district on Monday evening, following which curfew was reimposed in the five valley districts of the state. Unidentified gunmen arrived in camouflage dresses in the Lilong Chingjao area, and opened fire targeting locals. While three people died on the spot, five others were injured, officials said.

NOTCHING UP A PEG

Don't scorn at govt liquor shops, this MSIL boutique as 'high'-end as it gets

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a first, the Karnataka government has opened a premium liquor boutique at Basaveshwara Nagar in Bengaluru on par with high-end private outlets. This is an upgraded version of the existing MSIL outlet.

According to an official from MSIL, this liquor boutique will have all brands under one roof. The government has plans to open 200 such outlets across the state, including 20 in Bengaluru. "The ambience gives a sense of luxury liquor outlet with trained staff to attend to customers," he said.

Manojkumar, MD of MSIL, who launched the premium outlet on Thimmaiah Road in Basaveshwara Nagar, said the outlet has been designed keeping in mind the contemporary trends to provide a better customer experience.

"This is part of MSIL's plan to expand its market share by reaching out to a wider range of customers by making available premium liquor brands at its retail outlets," he said.

Customers can choose from a wide range of brands at the boutique opened in Basaveshwara Nagar in Bengaluru | KAGARAJA GADEKAL

LIQUOR WORTH ₹3K CR SOLD IN DEC

The Excise Department registered liquor sale of Rs 3,000 crore in December 2023, which is Rs 400 crore more than the corresponding month last year. The average monthly liquor sale in the state is around Rs 2,500 crore.

Similar boutiques will be opened on Dr Rajkumar Road, RPC Layout and Vijayanagar in Bengaluru in the coming days. Work on upgrading MSIL outlets at Shivananda Circle, Varthur, Kengeri Upanagar, Maruthi Seva Nagar, Hanumanth Nagar, and Doddanekkelli. These outlets are expected to be reopened within a few months, Manoj said.

MSIL owns 1,029 liquor outlets across the state. The plan to upgrade 200 outlets has been finalised under the guidance of Industries Minister MB Patil who is also the chairman of MSIL, to provide customers an experience similar to what they get in malls. Outlets being upgraded will be given a corporate touch, Manojkumar said.

He said MSIL's aim is to increase its transaction by around 40% to touch Rs 4,000 crore during the current year.

In addition to refurbishing the liquor outlets, MSIL aims to achieve a target of Rs 10,000 crore transaction through chit fund. It also has plans to open franchise outlets to sell stationery items and launch 10 mega pharmacy stores.